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SUBJECT: GENERAL ASSEMBLY COMMENTS ON SYG'S
COUNTERTERRORISM STRATEGY

REF: STATE 76209

Classified By: Amb. Alex Wolff, Deputy Permanent Representative, for Re
asons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In informal consultations of the General Assembly (closed to press and public) May 11 and 12, 36 delegations commented on the Secretary-General's recently released counterterrorism strategy. (UN Doc A/60/825 "Uniting against terrorism: recommendations for a global counter-terrorism strategy.") Most delegations expressed general support for the report, particularly its recommendations on capacity building, and a desire for the General Assembly to adopt and implement a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy.

¶2. (U) Many delegations commented on the report's sections on human rights, victims, the need to confront the "root causes" of terrorism, state terrorism and national liberation movements, the threat that terrorists could use weapons of mass destruction and other weapons, incitement, terrorists' travel, and denial of safe haven to terrorists. Egypt, Pakistan, Venezuela, and other non-aligned movement states focused on the need to address state terrorism, argued that attacks perpetrated by peoples living under foreign occupation seeking national liberation are not terrorism, and emphasized the need to confront the "root causes" of terrorism. Egyptian Permanent Representative Maged Abdelaziz, speaking without notes, made a negative, vitriolic intervention criticizing, among other things, the "occupation" of Iraq. Amb. Wolff delivered the U.S. statement (reftel). END SUMMARY.

Capacity Building

¶3. (U) Most delegations, including India, Israel, the European Union, Canada (on behalf also of Australia and New Zealand), Japan, Palau, and Argentina, supported the report's recommendations on capacity building as a key element of an international counterterrorism strategy. The EU, among other things, praised the report's focus on the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and its Executive Directorate as "the core of our efforts to improve the coherence and efficiency of technical assistance delivery." Repeating a position it takes consistently in the CTC, Japan stressed the need for "a close working relationship" with the G-8's Counter-Terrorism Action Group. Palau said the UN should move beyond its focus on providing assistance to states in drafting legislation or regulations or implementing best practices. The UN should work to ensure that states have resources to enforce legislation and regulations and can operate effective counterterrorism institutions, Palau argued.

¶4. (U) Some delegations cautioned against UN efforts to penalize states that do not fulfill their counterterrorism obligations. Argentina highlighted the importance of distinguishing between a lack of will to implement counterterrorism obligations and a lack of capacity, stressing that the General Assembly should determine which states are not fulfilling their obligations and assist those lacking capacity. China said it would not support any effort to impose Security Council sanctions on a state that does not meet its counterterrorism obligations.

Human Rights

¶5. (U) Most delegations affirmed the need to take human rights into account in countering terrorism, but several delegations cautioned that protecting human rights should not be an excuse for condoning terrorism. The EU said effective counterterrorism measures and the protection of human rights reinforce each other, and Canada called the defense of human rights "a key theme" in combating terrorism. In contrast, China cautioned that good governance and human rights are "not a panacea" to terrorism. China then said fighting terrorism safeguards human rights because terrorism is a "blatant violation of human rights," which victimizes innocents. It also said the Human Rights Council should play an active role on matters relating to terrorism. Turkey said human rights should "not be a pretext for indifference to terrorist acts targeting citizens of other countries."

Victims

¶6. (U) Delegations also emphasized the need to support victims of terrorism, although reactions to the report's recommendations on the issue varied. The EU called on states to consider putting systems in place at the national level to help promote victims' rights, and China and India both stressed the need to respect victims' human rights. The EU also encouraged the UN to explore the possibility of assisting victims, while Chile advocated an international compensation fund and Mexico called for international "cooperation" to assist victims. Russia called for focusing on victims to express "international solidarity" for their suffering. Turkey stressed the need to avoid distinguishing among victims of terrorist attacks, saying that combatants attacked by terrorists also are victims. Egypt spoke angrily about the assassination of the Egyptian ambassador in Iraq as well as other Egyptian nationals.

Root Causes

¶7. (U) Delegations were split on how to address the issue of root causes, with Egypt, Pakistan, Algeria, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and other non-aligned movement countries repeating their emphasis on foreign occupation, poverty, injustice, etc. as root causes of terrorism. Notably, Tunisia said the strategy should tackle conditions conducive to terrorism but not justify terrorist acts. The United States, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Turkey, and the EU, among others, emphasized that terrorism cannot be justified under any circumstances and welcomed the report's emphasis on exploitation by terrorists of certain conditions. The EU and Canada emphasized the need to promote good governance, the rule of law, human rights, and democracy and to work to resolve conflict. Canada then said "decades of research demonstrate that there is no established empirical or analytical evidence definitively linking a particular set of causal factors to the emergence or prolongation of violent movements, including terrorism." Delegations including the Philippines, Tunisia, and Japan noted the need to enhance

dialogue and understanding among religions and civilizations.

State Terrorism/National Liberation Movements

¶8. (U) Cuba, Algeria, Pakistan, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Venezuela, and Iran said a counterterrorism strategy must include state terrorism, while all but Yemen also said a counterterrorism strategy must distinguish between terrorism and the "legitimate" right of peoples to fight for self-determination. Pakistan, which provided one of the longer interventions on the subject, said militaries engaging in foreign occupation often carry out "wanton violence against innocent civilians and other non-combatants" and cited carpet-bombing, collective punishments, and targeted assassination as examples of state terrorism. Similarly, Jordan said targeting of civilians is terrorism. Cuba said it rejects terrorism, including that involving states indirectly or directly, as well as the use of terrorism as a pretext for violations of sovereignty. In contrast, Chile said struggles against foreign occupation can be legitimate but should not target innocent civilians.

¶9. (U) Canada, Liechtenstein, and Peru praised the report for avoiding difficult issues on which there is no agreement. Along similar lines, Liechtenstein, Canada, and the EU joined the United States in saying the negotiations of a Comprehensive Convention on Terrorism should remain independent from the discussions of a counterterrorism strategy. In contrast, Pakistan criticized the report for avoiding the issue of defining terrorism. Notably, while it expressed support for Pakistan's proposals, Saudi Arabia said it "might be possible" for the international community to combat terrorism without a detailed definition of terrorism.

Terrorists and WMD/Arms

¶10. (U) Several delegations, including India, Colombia, and Liechtenstein, highlighted the threat of terrorists accessing weapons of mass destruction and other arms. Canada noted the importance of resolution 1540 (2004) in preventing non-state actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction (WMD), while Japan, citing Aum Shinrikyo's sarin gas attacks in 1995, said the international community must consider all potential forms of terrorism. The EU expressed support for

the efforts of the IAEA and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), together with the 1540 Committee, to strengthen states' capacity to prevent terrorists from acquiring WMD and chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear materials, and urged the UN and the World Health Organization (WHO) to accelerate their work to combat biological terrorism. Cuba complained that the nonproliferation sections of the report did not adequately address disarmament and called the report's proposals to promote coherent approaches to combat biological weapons "impractical." Canada, Norway, Israel, and Sri Lanka also all noted the dangers of MANPADs.

Incitement

¶11. (U) Several delegations commented on the report's recommendations on preventing incitement to terrorism, particularly through exploitation of mass media. India said "self-restraint in reporting can dry up the propaganda motive of terrorists," and Turkey complained that although the PKK has been banned, it continues to operate "disguised" television stations in third countries that allow it to incite terrorism. Algeria objected to the report's recommendations to have the UN's resident coordinators monitor hate messages because the resident coordinators should not exceed their mandate to focus on development.

Argentina called for an examination of terrorists' use of the Internet, while Canada and the Holy See expressed support for resolution 1624 (2005).

Border Control, Travel, Denying Safe Haven

¶12. (U) Japan argued that the international community should move beyond its focus on countering terrorism financing and money laundering, saying it sees strengthening security in areas such as border control and port and aviation security as "urgent." Japan recommended strengthening existing measures relating to border control and other key areas through cooperation with international organizations including the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the World Customs Organization (WCO), and the International Maritime Organization (IMO). (Comment: Japan's comments were welcome and echoed points USUN has made in CTC meetings, to CTED, and to CTC members on the margins of the CTC meetings. End comment.) Israel and Turkey also both stressed the importance of preventing terrorists' travel and denying terrorists safe haven.

Egypt Blasts U.S. Policy

¶13. (C) Egyptian Permanent Representative Maged Abdelaziz, speaking without notes, gave the most negative statement, which included complaints that the Secretary-General had ignored Member States' (read Egyptian) input, recycled contentious proposals the General Assembly had discussed for "many years," deviated from consensus language in the Outcome Document, and discounted the General Assembly's main competence in matters relating to terrorism. Speaking in an angry, polemical tone, Abdelaziz said it would take "a few decades" for the General Assembly to reach agreement on a comprehensive strategy along the lines of the recommendations of the Secretary-General's report.

¶14. (C) He questioned why the report covered all of the UN's counterterrorism activities and complained that the report addresses many issues on which the General Assembly's Sixth Committee has disagreed for years and on which the General Assembly could not reach consensus when negotiating the Outcome Document last September. The report should have incorporated elements of the G-8, EU, and AU's strategies on counterterrorism, he argued, as well as comments Member States provided. He questioned why the report did not say whether the General Assembly would agree on a Comprehensive Convention, and did not address Egypt's proposal for a high-level General Assembly meeting on counterterrorism or Egypt's proposals in the Sixth Committee for an action plan on counterterrorism.

¶15. (C) While stating that "there is no excuse for terrorism," Abdelaziz devoted much of his remarks to a discussion of just that, particularly the need to address the underlying causes of terrorism. He accused the Secretary-General's report of "reopening controversial

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ground" by referring to the need to address conditions conducive to "exploitation by terrorists." That language, which delegations rejected in negotiating the Outcome Document, remains "unacceptable," he said.

¶16. (C) Abdelaziz then launched into a diatribe on root causes, pointing out that foreign occupation causes terrorism. Without mentioning the United States, he criticized U.S. policy in Iraq. "The reason for terrorism in Iraq is foreign occupation.... If the occupying power was removed," he charged, "we would not have terrorist attacks." He then said violence in the Palestinian territories is not terrorism and is caused by occupation.

¶17. (C) Comment: The Egyptian speech was particularly notable in a debate where Cuba and even Venezuela, while urging recognition in the document of "state terrorism," gave restrained speeches on the strategy. End comment.

Organizational Issues/Next Steps

¶18. (U) Delegations also commented on next steps, including on how to use the UN's existing structures most effectively. Venezuela, Cuba, Egypt, and Yemen advocated strengthening the General Assembly's role - not the Security Council's - in the UN's counterterrorism initiatives. China and Japan both called for better coordination to rationalize the work of the Security Council's counterterrorism committees. Russia argued the proposal to institutionalize the Secretary-General's task force on counterterrorism needed

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more study, while the EU, Canada, Chile, and Mexico endorsed it. Pakistan said it would distribute a paper outlining its specific proposals but said a comprehensive strategy could occur in three stages. In the short term, the strategy could include operational actions such as law enforcement and intelligence cooperation; in the medium term the strategy also should seek to establish "a normative basis" for countering terrorism, including by defining terrorism. In the long run, the strategy could seek to address extremism, promote a dialogue among civilizations, and overcome "socio-economic revival and transformation." Speaking generally, Iran called the report a "blueprint for glorification of might," and said "justice is missing."

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